

<b>COMPLAINT NUMBER</b>	20/398
<b>ADVERTISER</b>	Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG)
<b>ADVERTISEMENT</b>	Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) Television
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	19 October 2020
<b>OUTCOME</b>	No Grounds to Proceed

**Advertisement:** The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God : "Faith in Action" television advertisement includes a dubbed interview of a man telling his personal story of discovering faith. The man said before he joined the church he was homosexual, addicted to internet pornography and lonely. He said since then "God has given me the most beautiful woman in the world" and he wants to offer the transformation that the Lord made in him to other people.

**The Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.**

There were two complaints about this advertisement:

**Complaint 1:**

This programme discussed a man who was sexually abused by a priest, he reports turning to pornography, masturbation and becoming homosexual. He then discusses how he found God and was "saved" and now has a wife. These words were used multiple times. These words and themes should not be discussed at 8am on a Saturday morning when young children are often around.

Not to mention these are serious themes, imagine being a young person identifying as Gay and then feeling shame and distress that something is wrong with them.

**Complaint 2:**

I think 15 minutes into the program there was a man talking (in Portuguese) about how he found faith. He says he was homosexual and never had any sexual desire for women, how he was dating and online chatting with men. However he was unhappy, felt lonely and was not in a good place overall. So he turned to religion for support and it changed his life for better. It encouraged him to fight his "bad habits and addiction" and he married a woman. I find it appalling how homo sexually is portrayed as something evil that you turn to church to be freed from. I was really surprised to see these old fashioned and discriminating views on NZ television.

**The relevant provisions were Advertising Standards Code - Principle 1, Principle 2, Rule 1(c), Rule 2(e)**

**Principle 1: Social Responsibility:** Advertisements must be prepared and placed with a due sense of social responsibility to consumers and to society.

**Rule 1(c) Decency and Offensiveness:** Advertisements must not contain anything that is indecent, or exploitative, or degrading, or likely to cause harm, or serious or widespread offence, or give rise to hostility, contempt, abuse or ridicule.

**Principle 2: Truthful Presentation:** Advertisements must be truthful, balanced and not misleading.

**Rule 2(e) Advocacy advertising:** Advocacy advertising must clearly state the identity and position of the advertiser. Opinion in support of the advertiser's position must be clearly distinguishable from factual information. Factual information must be able to be substantiated

**The Chair** noted the Complainants' concerns the content of the advertisement was not appropriate for young children and could cause distress to young gay people, due to the views it expressed about homosexuality.

The Chair confirmed the advertisement was an advocacy advertisement for the purposes of the Advertising Standards Code, and the content in the advertisement represented the views of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG).

### **About Advocacy Advertising**

Complaints about advocacy advertising are considered differently to complaints about advertising for products and services.

In assessing whether an advocacy advertisement complies with the Advertising Standards Code, the freedom of expression provisions under the Bill of Rights Act 1990 must also be considered.

Section 14 of the Act says: "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and opinions of any kind in any form." This freedom of expression supports robust debate on current issues in a democracy.

Under Rule 2(e) Advocacy advertising of the Advertising Standards Code:

- The identity of the advertiser must be clear
- Opinion must be clearly distinguishable from factual information, and
- Factual information must be able to be substantiated.

If the identity and position of the Advertiser is clear, a more liberal interpretation of the Advertising Standards Code is allowed.

### **About this complaint**

The Chair acknowledged the Complainants' concerns about the content and timing of the advertisement.

The Chair said the Advertiser's identity was clear. Logos for "Faith in Action" and "Universal" were displayed many times throughout the half hour infomercial advertisement. The "UCKG Help Centre" was also referred to at the beginning of the testimony made by another member of the church. Address and telephone numbers for the Advertiser were displayed. The Chair said the Advertiser's message was clear. The advertisement therefore met the criteria for an advocacy advertisement.

The Chair considered the nature of the advertisement, presenting the views of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) was apparent from the outset, with scenes of people attending religious services and a preacher speaking from a pulpit.

The Chair confirmed the advertisement had been given an M (Mature) rating by the Commercial Approvals Bureau. An M rating (formerly known as PGR) is defined as:

May be broadcast after 7.30pm or during news programmes, or daytime programmes suited for mature audiences but not necessarily unsuitable for child viewers when subject to the guidance of a parent or an adult.

The Chair acknowledged the Complainants' concerns about the timing of the advertisement, broadcast on TV One at 8am on a Saturday morning. The Chair noted that programmes for children do screen early on Saturday morning on TV2 but said 7.30am to 9am on TV One is an established timeslot for this type of infomercial.

The Chair said the testimony presented by the man who has recently joined the church is a personal story, about his own life. The Chair said such expression of opinion, in an M rated advertisement, screened during the appropriate time slot, is allowable under the Code.

The Chair ruled the advertisement had not breached Principles 1 and 2 or Rules 1(c) or 2(e) of the Advertising Standards Code.

The Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

**Chair's Ruling:** Complaint **No Grounds to Proceed**

#### **APPEAL INFORMATION**

According to the procedures of the Advertising Standards Complaints Board, all decisions are able to be appealed by any party to the complaint. Information on our Appeal process is on our website [www.asa.co.nz](http://www.asa.co.nz). Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 calendar days of receipt of this decision.